(ii) Any offence punishable with imprisonment or deprivation of liberty for a period of one year or more will be an extraditable offence.

(iii) Extraditon shall not be granted for political offences. The Treaty contains a list of offences which will not be considered as offences of a political character.

(iv) The Contracting States are not bound to extradite their own nationals, and they would be prosecuted by the Requested State in respect of the offence(s) in question.

Chinese plan to lay railway line in Lhasa

†538. SHRI RAMA SHANKER KAUSHIK: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether China is laying down or have decided to lay down the highest railway line of the world upto Lhasa;

(b) if so, what would be its impact on different works including security of the country and whether Government have lodged any objection with China; and

(c) if so, Chinese reaction and decision thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) Yes, Sir. China is constructing a railway line from Golmud in Qinghai Province to Lhasa.

(b) and (c) Government has taken note of this development Government remains vigilant and takes all necessary and appropriate measures to safeguard the sovereignty, territorial integrity and security of India.

Visa relaxation to Pakistani Nationals

539. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have further given relaxation of the visa regime for Pakistani nationals recently aimed at winning Pakistani hearts and to improve trade relations;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(c) in what manner these relaxations differ from earlier concessions/ relaxations given to Pakistani nationals;

(d) whether similar relaxations are likely to be given to Indian nationals by Pakisan Government; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) to (c) Through a press release issued on July 9, 2001 the Government of India announced that henceforth Pakistan Passport holders will be allowed to come by the road route and obtain visas at the check-post at Attari. An additional check-post will also be opened at Munabao, in Rajasthan. Similar check-post will also be opened at designated points along the International Border (IB) and the Line of Control (LOC) in Jammu & Kashmir. These facilities did not exist earlier.

(d) and (e) The grant of visa and other facilities is the sovereign prerogative of each country.

Indian Prisoners of War in Pakistani Jails

540. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that more than 56 Prisoners of War (POWs) are still languishing in Pakistani jails since the 1971 war; namely in Kot Lakhpat, Muri and Landikottal jails;

(b) whether it is also a fact that more than 93,000 Pakistani POWs were returned by India in 1972 after the Simla Agreement; and

(c) if so, whether POWs issue figured in Indo-Pak high level Pervez-Atal Agenda on humanitarian grounds with a view to seek release of Indian POWs still languishing in jails and mental asylums in Pakistan?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) As per available information, 54 Indian Prisoners of War (POWs) are believed to be in the custody of Pakistan.

(b) As per records available, a total of 90065 POWs were repatriated up to 30 April, 1974, out of which 79 were repatriated to Bangladesh.